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ABSTRACT

In pre-revolutionary Cuba, social relations between the sexes evolved from the perception that the Spanish patrifocal family was the ideal to be pursued. Rules of social conduct were founded on fundamental sexual inequality. By the early 1960's the sexually egalitarian ideals of Marxism were politically, socially, and economically imposed upon this rigid traditional sexual ethos. The consequences of this phenomenon were decidedly conflictual and the process of amelioration became a prime focus of the revolutionary Cuban leadership which sought to restructure the school system and redefine the meaning of education. This paper focuses on the use of education as an agent of directed culture change in achieving sexual equality in post-revolution Cuba. In addition to fieldwork which included observation, visits to schools and workplaces, interviewing individuals and groups such as the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, and administering an occupational preference questionnaire to 60 adolescents for the purpose of evaluating occupational preference as a function of sex, a thorough analysis of Cuban government documents such as those on the Federation of Cuban Women, textbooks, and the literature on Cuba in U.S. libraries was performed. The literature within the subdisciplines of anthropology and education and culture change theory were reviewed in order to develop a model which could be used to analyze the fieldwork data. The model examines the place of women in four social arenas: socio-political action, schooling, work, and the family. Since the family remains a private domain, therefore, despite nearly 30 years of concerted effort, Cuba has had limited success in achieving sexual equality. Data are presented in graphs. A 12-item bibliography is included. (GEA)

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THE EDUCATION OF CUBAN WOMEN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICS OF GENDER

By Rex R. Hutchens
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THE EDUCATION OF CUBAN WOMEN:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICS OF GENDER

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One of the more striking features of Marxist social philosophy is its sexually egalitarian ideal. Marx and Engels asserted that the origins of sexual exploitation lay in the economic foundations of society. That is, sexual inequality was a function of the capitalist economic system, having its origins in the concept of private property (Engels 1942:12). Subsequent Marxist theoreticians tended to admit to a greater degree of complexity with regard to the place of women in society than the early seminal socialist writers (see the bibliography of Slaughter, 1979). Recognizing the constituent elements of this complexity as cultural, Fidel Castro (1975:279) termed these cultural elements "subjective factors," referring to the culturally acquired values that persist through time, reinforced by parental attitudes, peer pressure and such other maintenance mechanisms usually covered under the rubric of "tradition" by anthropologists.

In the case of pre-revolutionary Cuba, the traditional elements of the culture that determined the nature of social

relations between the sexes formed a relatively rigid and intact set of rules which closely governed both behavior and attitude. The rules evolved from the perception that the Spanish patrifocal family commonly found in the middle and upper classes in Latin America was an ideal to be pursued. These rules were founded on an assumption of fundamental sexual inequality. The role and status of both men and women were well prescribed and predictable. These assumptions of sexual differentiation were rooted in social, biological and psychological rationales that admitted of very little deviation.

By the early 1960's the sexually egalitarian ideals of Marxism were politically, socially and economically imposed upon this rigid traditional sexual ethos. The consequences of this phenomenon were decidedly conflictual. The process of ameliorating this conflict became a prime focus of Cuban leadership in the early days of the Revolution. The result of this focus was a well-defined program of institutional changes which radically altered the meaning and purpose of many social systems; including the schools. The revolutionary leadership sought not only a restructuring of the school system; it sought as well to redefine the MEANING of education. As Che Guevara said, "Society as a whole must become a huge school" (as quoted in Bowles 1971:472). Cuban leaders, in attacking what they termed the "capitalist-exploitive" status of women in Cuba at the time of the Revolution, chose education as their primary weapon. In the Cuban view the term "education" does not simply describe the

processes in a formal school room setting, but rather the education process has formal, non-formal and informal qualities and is pervasive in the society, occurring on the streets, in the media, home, neighborhood, etc.

This research focused on the use of education as an agent of directed culture change in achieving sexual equality in post Revolution Cuba. Revolutionary societies, such as Cuba, provide an excellent opportunity to study attempts at directed culture change since the radical and permanent restructuring of the entire society is a fundamental intended goal of the revolutionary process.

This research sought:

1. to determine the intent of the revolutionary leadership with regard to the place of women in Cuban society,

2. to assess the success of the revolutionary leadership in achieving their intent regarding the place of women in Cuban society,

3. to examine the policy and practices of the revolutionary leadership with regard to the above intent, and

4. to evaluate the consequences of the policies and practices in terms of their long-term effects on the sexual ethos of Cuba.

In addition to fieldwork which included observation, visits to schools and workplaces, interviewing individuals and groups such as a Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, and

administering an occupational preference questionnaire to sixty adolescents for the purpose of evaluating occupational preference as a function of sex, a thorough analysis of Cuban government documents such as those of the Federation of Cuban Women, textbooks, and the literature on Cuba in U.S. libraries was performed.

Finally the literature within the subdisciplines of anthropology & education and culture change theory were reviewed in order to develop a model which could be used to analyze the fieldwork data. Selecting the paradigmatic models of Kuhn (1970) and Wallace (1972) and incorporating a parallel pairs model as suggested by Engel (1980), an experimental model of culture change was generated for testing.

This model was applied first to general culture change by examining the place of women in four social arenas: socio-political action, schooling, work and the family. The resultant parallel pairs model is shown in Figure 1.

Arenas of Culture Change

Model Categories	SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTION	SCHOOLING	WORK	FAMILY	
INNOVATION					
CORE DEV.					E
EXPLOITATION					D
FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES					U
RATIONAL-IZATION					C A T I O N

Figure 1. Parallel Pairs Model with Education as the Agent of Directed Culture Change

In this model the four arenas on the x-axis are self-explanatory. The model categories along the y-axis are briefly described here; a more extensive description is available in Wallace (1972). An INNOVATION (of a new paradigm) occurs which entails conflict with the older one which it must replace; solves a limited problem but does so in such a way which opens up a new line of development; and has symbolic and charismatic qualities which are often associated with the name of a culture hero. PARADIGMATIC CORE DEVELOPMENT is the continuous elaboration of the ideas which constitute the original paradigm. Generations of trained workers make "contributions" to the perfection of the paradigm by resolving any internal ambiguities and contradictions and by demonstrating its utility in solving newly discovered problems. EXPLOITATION is the recognition and embracing of the

paradigm, at some stage in its evolution, by an economic, military, religious, or political organization other than the paradigmatic community, which sees in its application an opportunity for the protection or advancement of its own interests. The exploiting group may not only wish to apply the paradigm but they may wish to control in some measure the direction and rate of development of the paradigmatic core itself. FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES are the new specific problems which the exploitation of the core development process creates in a society, and the way in which the society responds, at first by expedients, and eventually by culture change. RATIONALIZATION is the ethical, philosophical, religious and political justification which the paradigmatic community members offer for their participation in the core development process, and which the general community members offer for their relationship to the paradigm, such as "It will lead to a better world." Both exploitation and functional consequences occur concurrently with paradigmatic core development; rationalization occurs across all of the model categories. Wallace indicated this "overlapping" quality of the various elements of the model, the last four of which "... are actually continuous over the life of the paradigm" (1972:468).

In order to arrive at the specific education means employed in Cuba to effect directed culture change, the data collected in the four arenas was organized into the model categories as shown in Figure 2.

Model Categories	ARENAS			
	SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTION	WORK	SCHOOLING	FAMILY
INNOVATION	Universal Participation of women in the social relations of production	Incorporation of Women into the labor force	Access to Schooling combined with encouragement to perform	New Basis for the family
PARADIGMATIC CORE DEVELOPMENT	Mass Organizations Literacy Campaign Schools for Peasant Women Universal Communication People's Power	Retraining of Domestics Communal facilities Expanded preparation through training	Increase overall schooling level Increase Staff/Materials/ Facilities Moral vs Econ. incentives Work integrate w/school Sexual integration in schools The Improvement Plan	
EXPLOITATION	Exploitive dimension of the Literacy Campaign The New Constitution Voluntary Labor	Work-related legislation	Curriculum ideologically oriented Priority assignment of training Ridicule	The Fundamental Law The New Constitution The Family Code Thesis III Birth Control
FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES	Demographic consequences of the Lit. campaign Dynamics of political participation of women Greater social cohesion	More equal sex ratios in jobs Changes in Productivity Conflict/Cooperation in work Changes in occup. aspirations Elimination of prostitution the Double Burden	Increased schooling level Education class structure Labor as schooling Interest Circles Elimination of sexual bias in textbooks Truancy and Backwardness in schooling Consequences of the Improvement Plan	Increased Marriage/Divorce rates Child-centered society Shift in family structure & function Increased econ. independence for women New Sexual Morality Shift in family power structure
RATIONALIZATION	The raising of women's status is a just goal which will benefit the country as a whole	People will begin to see themselves mirrored in their work Women's emancipation must begin in the work place	Revolution & Education are the same thing	The family flourishes under Socialism

Figure 2. Data from the four arenas organized into the Paradigm

The above data may then be segmented into more generic categories by determining those specific knowledge transmission techniques utilized in Cuba to effect a change in ethos. These are termed the educational means. Figure 3 shows examples of Educational Means.

Educational Means	DATA
Mass Media	Films about women Special Radio & TV programs on women Magazines for women
Social Relations	No sexually segregated schools Work integrated with schooling Moral vs Economic incentives
Formal Curriculum	Equal curricular access Textbooks
Legislation	Family Code Protective Legislation Constitution
Mass Organizations	Federation of Cuban Women Committee for the Defense of the Revolution Confederation of Cuban Workers National Assn of Small Farmers People's Power

Figure 3. Representative Illustration of Education Means

Returning to the paradigmatic model of culture change discussed previously and developing a parallel pairs model utilizing not the arenas but the educational means, the educational functions were derived (See Figure 4). The educational functions are those roles fulfilled by the educational means which function to transmit and maintain the

paradigm of culture change. Each educational function is discussed below with particular reference to the educational mean shown in Figure 3.

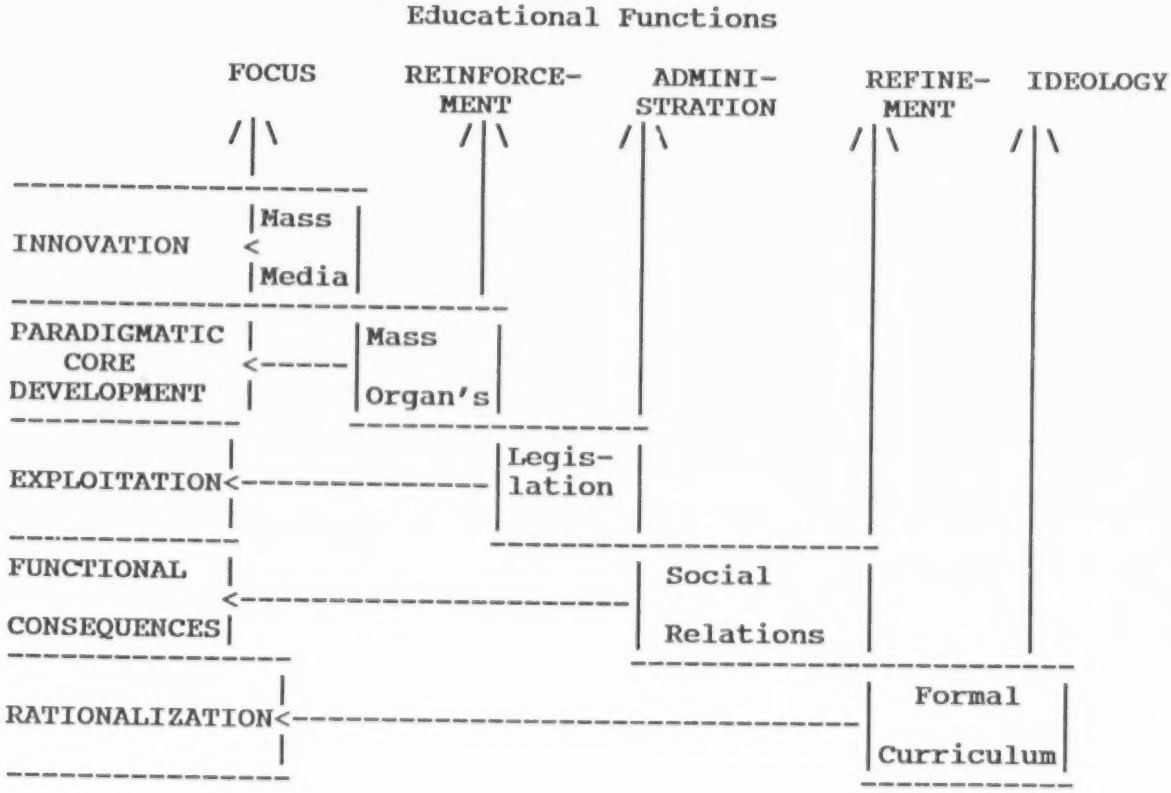

Figure 4. The Fully Developed Education Model.

Focusing the Innovation. The process of focus functions to maintain a clear perception of exactly what is to be accomplished by the innovation and thus prevents the innovation from becoming diffuse and/or unattainable. In Cuba the mass media serve to focus the innovation. Although not utilized as extensively as possible, the media is being utilized in a limited capacity to further the goals of the Revolution. The FMC (Federation of Cuban

Women) refers specifically to special radio programs, magazines and television productions and simultaneously recognizes the potential of the mass media: "We feel that the mass communications media offer broad possibilities that can be used for the education of the masses regarding the equality of women as well as a wealth of other themes aimed at improving the formation of the younger generations (FMC 1980(b):16-18).

Reinforcement by Paradigmatic Core Development. For an innovation to take root 'reinforcement' is required. Reinforcement is accomplished by the elaboration of the innovation by paradigmatic core development. In Cuba this process was sustained and encouraged by participation in the mass organization. Faced with continuing sexual inequality, the government used the mass organizations to begin to cement the ideology of sexual equality in the minds of the people.

Exploitation by Administration. The exploitation of the innovation is an event which occurs at all levels in Cuban society, especially with regard to issues of women's rights. The control of the direction and rate of the innovation is administered by a mechanism of legislation that might not normally be considered education-- the law. In Cuba legislation is regarded as a fundamental mechanism of educating the populace. The Constitution of Cuba was adopted on February 24, 1976. It is replete with articles devoted to socialist egalitarian philosophy. The Constitution is more than a legal document; it is

an educational document, as are all of the instruments of legal protection within the decrees of the government (The Family Code, etc.). These documents present not only legal responsibilities but also explain the supporting moral values. Castro stated it thus, "It will not be the law, it will not be the coercive force of the state but, rather, social conscience that imposes on each citizen the idea that he cannot commit the crime of creating an ignoramus or of bring an ignoramus into the world" (quoted in Read 1972:384).

Refinement Through Functional Consequences. The reinforcement of the paradigmatic core development is supported by refinement as a result of functional consequences. Adaptations can be made in programs which are not accomplishing the objectives of paradigmatic core development. In order to effect refinement, evaluation is a necessary factor in any education system. The status of women is a construct subordinate to the more generic concept of social relations. As noted by Kohn, the social relations of the schooling process itself convey the "hidden" content of schooling, that is the values, expectations and patterns of behavior which schools encourage. In Cuba this observation is particularly apt. In keeping with Marxist historical theory, every effort has been made to maintain the assumed reflective nature of the society and its economic infrastructure. According to Marxist social theory, society reflects the relations of production; similarly, schools are viewed as reflections of the social relations of society. At the

same time, the recognition of Cuba as a society in the process of becoming an ideal that it is not causes the school to become a model to be emulated. In terms of this research, schools reflect the social relations in Cuban society as much by what they are as by what they are not. They are not sexually segregated, so schooling is seen as the right of everyone. The school is not supposed to be a place where class distinctions are created, maintained or even allowed, so class distinctions, whether social, economic, or racial, are not seen as appropriate or relevant; for example, students must wear uniforms. Work is highly valued, so the school becomes a place where that value is expressed by example and participation. As Jose Marti expressed it:

> In school, one must learn how to deal with the forces with which one must struggle in life. We should say workshops not schools. In the afternoons, the pen, but in the mornings, the hoe (quoted in Wald, 1978:341).

Castro addressed the issue more extensively:

> In a collective society where material goods must be produced by all members of society, it is logical that work become an essential part of the education of the whole person. We must start creating the conditions for all human beings to envision world as the fulfillment of their aptitudes, their intelligence, their vocation, and their personality (quoted in Wald, 1978:342).

Ideology as Rationalization. Within the general framework of Cuban culture the rationalization for the change in the status of women requires continual ideological support. Overt demonstrations of sexual bias are considered 'counter-

revolutionary', the most vilifying adjective possible for any behavior in contemporary Cuba. The literature reveals a consistent pattern of ideological support from Marx to Castro that is being effectively used to support the drive for sexual equality. The educational means for ideological rationalization is through the formal curriculum in the schools. The curriculum is heavily oriented toward 'correct' political awareness;it is a continuing effort to raise the socialist consciousness of children in regard to sexual equality. To a large extent, sexually specific curriculum, such as "shop" and "home economics", was integrated, and the same basic skills are being taught to boys and girls collectively. This is a polyphasic event, skills as well as attitudes are taught through the social relations of the schooling process.

The concerted efforts within Cuban society to effect equality between the sexes have emphasized broadly defined educational techniques as significant agents to direct both a change in behavior and a change in the traditional attitudes. Undoubtedly these efforts have been successful to a limited extent. Women in general are achieving a higher level of schooling, are participating in the political process and are joining the productive labor force in capacities other than as servants, teachers or nurses; however, the more traditional attitudes about the place of women in society continues to persist. Many women view themselves and are still viewed by Cuban men, as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters-- women in need of some protection.

Thus the behavior of women and the behavior of men toward women has been permanently and extensively changed in Cuba, but the sexual ethos, which has been more resistant to change, is in a marked state of transition.

Despite nearly 30 years of concerted effort, the limited success of achieving sexual equality in Cuba suggests a breakdown in the system developed in Cuba. The culture change model utilized in this research for organizing the data reveals a possible explanation. Paradigmatic core development has not occurred in the family arena. The family remains a private domain. The government does not have sufficient accessibility to the family nor does it have sufficient control over the activities, conduct and attitudes within the the family to contribute to paradigmatic core development in this arena.

Attempts to exert control within the family have primarily taken the form of legislation and increasing the number of traditional household tasks being accomplished by outside agencies. The Family Code adopted in 1975 is an excellent example. The draft version of the Code was submitted to the general population for discussion and suggestions through the mass organizations and was approved by 98% of those who participated in the meetings. The Cuban jurist Blas Roca said,

> This Family Code, the first of its kind in the history of our country, grants complete judicial equality to women and children within the context of the family ... marriage is freed from the economic, almost commercial character of the civil code. Marriage can only be sustained in the light of love, reciprocal affection,

> mutual understanding and the cooperation resulting from this understanding for the fulfillment of duties with regard to the family and society (quoted in Suhor 1975:12).

This legislation, however, was not designed to coerce equality in the home; law without penalty has little immediate effect. The Family Code functioned to draw the attention of society to the issue of equality for women in the home and continues to function as educational material.

Despite the limited success, education is a vital force in directed culture change in Cuba. Marxism provided a consistent philosophy which guided the development of education to achieve universal accessibility of education, integration of knowledge and work, and integration of the educational process with the rest of society. Education as an instrument of directed culture change is successful in Cuba to the extent that it is because of the centralization of authority within the revolutionary framework of both education and the women's movement.

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